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NUMBER 2



Boom Town

IN ITS HEYDAY, parking was at a premium in downtown Middleboro, as evidenced by this photo of South Main Street, looking toward the Four Corners. Note the diagonal parking. The photograph

is undated, but must have been taken sometime after 1928, when new street lights were installed and overhead wires were placed underground.

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Middleboro's Family Heirlooms

By Jane Lopes

Remember when you were young, and went to visit your grandparents, perhaps for a week in the summer? Somewhere in the house, either on display or tucked away in attic eaves, were scrapbooks filled with family pictures, trunks of clothing and family wedding dresses, heirloom furniture, and portraits of somber-looking ancestors.

Now imagine that some of those ancestors were average citizens, some were quite well-known in the community, and others were famous all over the world, and you have some idea of the contents of the Middleborough Historical Museum, an extended "Grandma's Attic" filled with treasures whose value, like family heirlooms, is mainly based in memories and associations.

This summer, and the museum's regular operating season, are almost gone, but there is still time to pay a visit to Middleboro's history. The museum is open to the public from 1 to 4, Wednesday through Friday, through the end of August, and the first two Sundays in September. Group tours can also be arranged by calling the museum, 947-1969, during operating hours, or by contacting museum director-curator Marsha Manchester.

MIDDLEBOROUGH ANTIQUARIAN

Middleboro, Mass.

VOLUME XXVII 1989 NUMBER 2

Jane C. Lopes Editor

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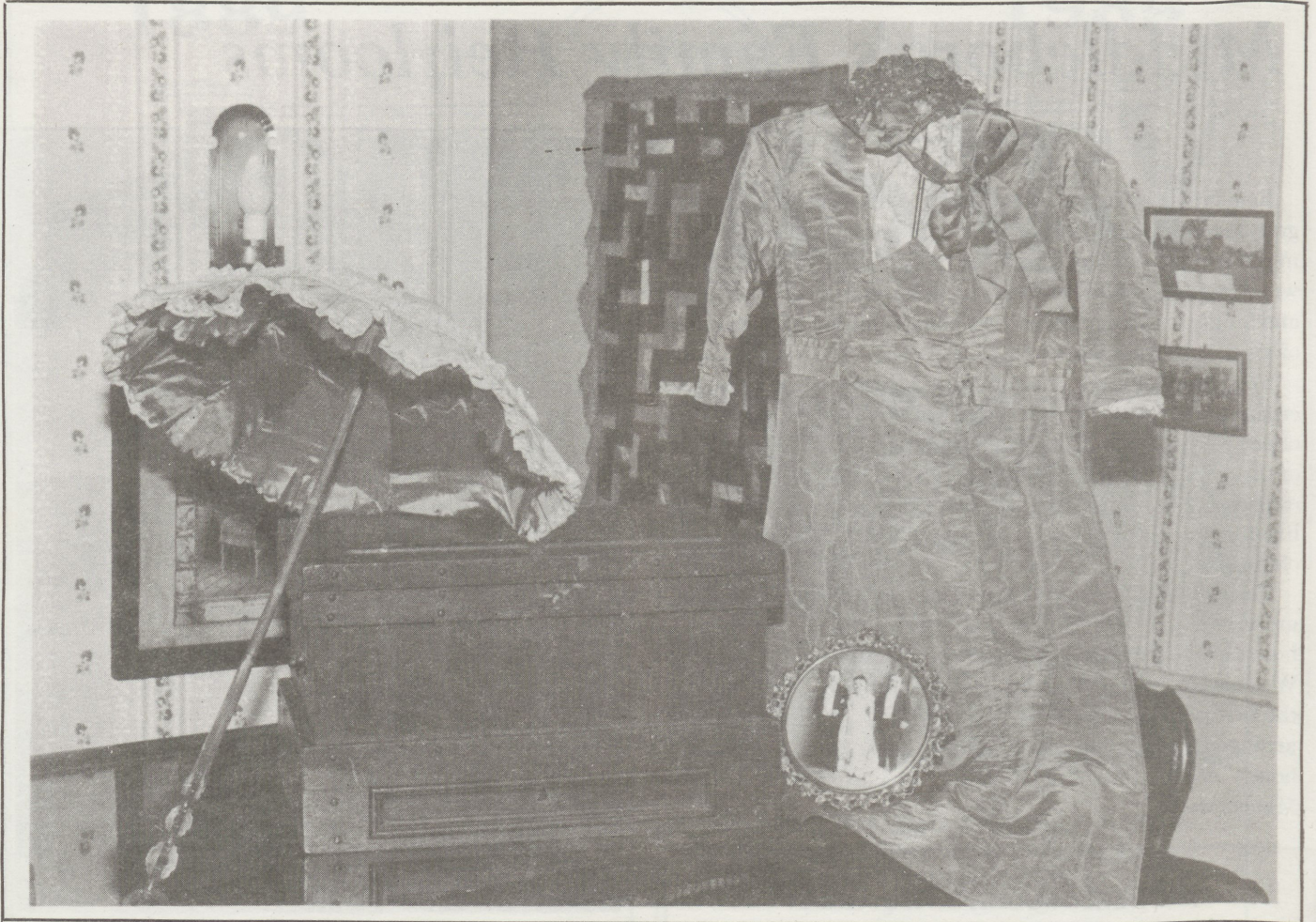


HISTORICAL Association secretary Ruth G. Watt donated a number of items to the museum this summer, including these charming children's outfits dating from the 1880s. Both are hand sewn, made of wool and fully lined. One is red with black trim, and the other is a green, red, blue and black plaid. (Photo by Jane Lopes)

Mrs. Manchester, an antiques dealer for a number of years, has enhanced the museum with her knowledge of antique furniture, clothing and the decorative arts. Pieces in the museum collection which were tucked away in corners have been dusted off and brought out for visitors to see, offering longtime members and newcomers alike something new to admire and study.

In addition, the museum collection has been augmented this summer through the generosity of several donors. Lois Brown of Lee, a great-great-niece of Lavinia Warren, better known as Mrs. Tom Thumb, has donated a handsome mahogany toolbox owned by General Tom Thumb, along with a lovely beige silk parasol and some clothing owned by Lavinia. Some family portraits were included among the contributions relating to Middleboro's famous "Little People."

Some less famous little people once wore the clothing donated to the museum by Middleborough Historical Association secretary Ruth G. Watt. Contributions made to the museum
(Continued next page)



GENERAL TOM THUMB'S toolbox, a parasol and gown owned by Lavinia Warren (Mrs. Tom Thumb), and photographs of the famous "little people" have been donated to the Historical Museum by Lavinia's

great-great-niece. The parasol is made of beige silk and silk blend, and has a mother of pearl or seashell handle, while the violet satin gown is trimmed with lace and has a matching cap. (Photo by Jane Lopes)

um by Mrs. Watt include children's clothing dating from the 19th century, a blanket chest, a feather mattress and samplers made by members of the Tillson family of Middleboro.

Since the maintenance of the museum and its collections depends on contributions, a visit to the museum helps to preserve it for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations. Those interested in helping further can join the association for a modest fee which includes a subscription to this magazine, which is published quarterly and contains photographs and articles on Middleboro history.

The family theme extends into this issue of *The Antiquarian* with an article on the Eddy family of East Middleboro, excerpts from a diary kept by James G. Thompson of North Middleboro, and the late Louise Pratt's memories from her childhood on the Pratt farm. Association members and others are encouraged to share their own family histories, or some interesting item of Middleboro history, with our readers in future issues of the *Antiquarian*. Manuscripts, story ideas and photographs may be mailed to Jane Lopes, 61 Everett St., Middleboro, MA 02346, or call 947-1760 days, 947-0841 evenings and weekends. All items will be returned at the request of contributors.

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JAMES G. THOMPSON wrote entries in his diary from his home on Pleasant Street in North Middleboro. The property is currently owned by Roger and

Jean Parent. The granite posts in front of the house were purchased by Mr. Thompson in 1849 and are mentioned in his diary. (Photo by Jane Lopes)

1849 Revisited

By George M. Barden, Jr.

An old diary is a window on the past, giving one a glimpse of the customs and events of a bygone era from the perspective of one who lived contemporaneously with them. The similarities of the daily routine of yesteryear to that of today, as well as the differences between the values and attitudes then and now, can be startling. The diary of James Gardner Thompson, written in 1849, provides such a window. Mr. Thompson filled his diary with local news, business records, a log of the weather, and events of national interest. He also recorded certain information that evidently fell into his version of "Top Secret" classification, using a kind of Indian picture writing of his own invention; the code remains undeciphered to this day and his secret is still intact. Fortunately, most of the diary is written in plain English.

J. G. Thompson, with his wife Anna (Pratt) and children, lived in the house at the southwest corner of Center and Pleasant streets in Titicut. Although he maintained a small farm on the property, several days a week he drove his horse and buggy to the station and took "the cars" to Boston where he kept an office in the morning before starting on a two-day

business trip that would take him to Hartford, Springfield, Concord (NH) or Portland and back to Boston; public transportation was evidently as good 140 years ago as it is today. Sundays always found him home in Titicut. A typical entry for Sunday reads:

"Sunday, May 2. Fair. Went to church all day. Rev. Mr. Colby preached."

The Reverend Philip Colby was the minister of the North Congregational Church in 1849, but on some occasions the preaching would be done by others: Rev. Enoch Pratt of Barnstable, Rev. Brigham, Rev. Roberts, Rev. Sanford, or the Elder Briggs. On one Sunday afternoon:

at 4-1/2 p.m. at my house Wm. Ramsden and Esther P. Whitcomb were married by me."

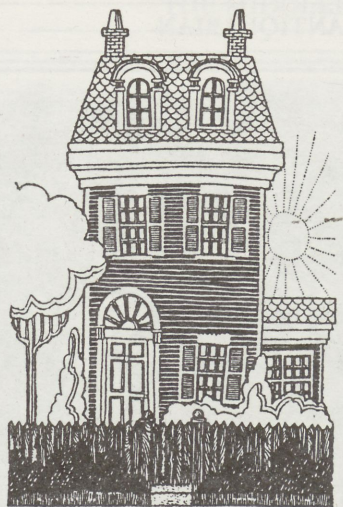
Mr. Thompson was a Justice of the Peace, but this is the only instance of his acting in that capacity mentioned in the diary.

Spending so much of his time at his business in Boston, Mr. Thompson found it necessary to get help for the chores around the farm. One of many such entries shows that on:

"Thursday, Sept. 20. Wind easterly, cool morning.

(Continued on page 12)

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from
home*



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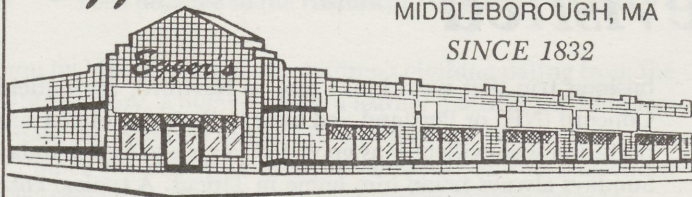
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Childhood Memories of the Pratt Farm

(The following article was written by Louise Pratt shortly before her death. Miss Pratt recalled her childhood days on the Pratt Farm, now a town-owned conservation area.)

I was born on the Pratt Farm in 1887 to L. Bradford and Sarah L. Pratt. There were three of us, Ernest, Louise and Isabel; I am Louise. The large Georgian homestead, built about 1770, had recently been remodelled from a saltbox in back with the old fireplace and brick oven. My Grandma Pratt had an apartment there. She was Irene Bradford, daughter of Dr. Luther Bradford and Mary Standish of Plympton. She was one of twelve children, so many came to the farm over the years. She died when I was fifteen years old. The farm was ninety-eight acres in those days but my brother Ernest built it up to about two hundred acres.

I just remember the old grist mill by the mill pond. On this pond in earlier years was an encampment of Tispaquin's Indians and many arrowheads have been found here. Front lots were sold or given by my grandfather to sisters or brothers when they married. The farm stretched from the Chester Weston place on Sachem Street to East Main Street and up East Main to the top of Pratt's Hill and back nearly to Wood Street. Two brooks flowed under the street to the river and we used to drive the horse down to drink and to set the tires. My grandfather also owned a pew at the Church at the Green which has passed down to me. But we went to the Central Church and tied the horse to the railing on what is now Nickerson Avenue.

What a delightful place the farm was for us to grow up. We roamed the fields and woods and I'm afraid the wetlands. We knew where the wildflowers grew, from the early Jack-in-the-Pulpit to the late wild asters. On the Stony Brook road I could find laurel, wood violets, lady's slippers, princess pine and pipsissewa. The woods could hold an Indian raid. One day a group of small boys needed a victim and my brother was sent to bring me up to a place called White Plain. The Indians burst from the woods with plenty of war-whoops, successfully scaring a small white settler. When I was little I remember my dad taking me down to the street where a man walking with a bear on a chain had stopped.

Tramps were common and mother usually gave them a thick sandwich. The ragman came in a big wagon, and the hulled corn man and the tin peddler. He had an enormous wagon with posts on which hung the cooking ware. Usually sugar and flour were bought by the barrel. Pies were a staple. Sometimes we had one of the hired men boarding with us. The P. H. Pierce man came in the a.m. for orders, in the p.m. he delivered the order. Kerosene for the lamps was in a gallon tin can, vinegar and molasses each in a gallon stone jug. We had a vegetable cellar and apples too were stored there. I remember slices of brown brown with thick cream on them

and for a snack a slice of homemade bread with molasses and thick cream. We were sent outdoors to eat that.

In a small field back of the barn we picked strawberries and sold the extras for fifteen cents a box or two for a quarter. In season we picked cranberries after school and got a round ticket which we could each cash in for real money. There was a screen house in back of the house. We picked blueberries; the highs grew near the river. There were beechplums and wild grapes to find. We had two apple orchards near the road and a croquet ground.

We couldn't help notice the birds for they were all about us. The oriole nests hung from the tall elms by the street. After the chipping sparrow had left the nest in the honeysuckle by the door I found the nest with its soft lining. In season the air was filled with barn and tree swallows, my favorites. The killdeer nested in the gravel road to the big meadow. Bluebirds were in the apple orchards and I can still hear their plaintive songs. Robins had nests in unlikely places, one just over the door, one on a plough. When ice was cut the cranberry bog and brook meadow were flooded. When the water was drained in the spring, hundreds of red-wings fed in the bright green grass and their liquid conquerers made sweet music. In the deep dusk if I was brave enough to walk the farm road toward the cranberry bog I could hear the clarion call of the whip-poor-will, one I still love to hear.

I remember a day's trip to see relatives in Sagamore over dirt roads in a carryall and with a pair of horses.

Most Sunday afternoons we rode out with Little Dandy and the democrat or trap. We drove to nearby towns or countrysides, sometimes to visit, once to Pope's Point to see a harness maker. I remember a day's trip to see relatives in Sagamore over dirt roads in a carryall and with a pair of horses. Prior to the advent of the automobile our roads when it snowed were not ploughed. When the snow was well packed sleigh races on South Main Street were held. My father used to race with the other sleighs and fast horses.

We children at an early age learned to drive a horse and to skate. My first strokes were aided by a kitchen chair. There were skating parties and many from the town came down to skate on the big ponds. I skated until I was in my eighties; it was my favorite winter sport. Later a friend and I were to buy the first skis in town and I used the gentle farm slopes.

Although my father and brother were businessmen the farm was always well groomed with fields of hay, corn vetch and vegetable garden. The first peas were ready by July 4th, and

corn when picked, husked and on the table within the hour was beyond compare. The farm was always loved by children and my dad was Uncle Braddy to half the children of the town it seemed. He and my brother always welcomed them and they rode on the hay carts and wagons and fished in the brooks.

The boiling springs were always important to us. When company came the younger ones were taken up the cranberry bog dike, across the flume, past the alders to two springs under nearby twin oaks. We knelt, and pushing away stones or watercress so the water could run off better, we drank and gazed with awe at the incredible bubbles boiling out of the white sand. The water is tops and still prized by those who come for it. There is another lovely spring in back of the trout hatchery.

Alfalfa was planted on the flat top of the hill by the old pine tree, where a road goes over to a field surrounded by woods. The Stony Brook road goes to Wood Street from this field. On top of this hill also my dad buried his favorite horses. There were many picnics in the grove near Sachem Street. Both Sunday School groups and our own young relatives and friends loved to come. In later years many have told us of the good times they had on the farm.

I remember some businesses my father conducted. He bought wood lots and logs were carted to the mill on log gears. Wood choppers cut and stacked wood in one-cord piles. He ran a meat business for twelve years. He built a bog and raised cranberries. Neighbor women were hired to screen the berries. They were shipped in barrels or crates to New York and Boston. In 1898 the big barn and carriage house on a hill by the brook burned down one winter night. Lawns were graded and sand and gravel were sold for many years. Near the springs is a terminal moraine and there is the pit containing some of the finest gravel in town. He owned several cows and many horses. He built roads for the Plymouth County Commissioners. One was in Scituate from the North River bridge north. I was twelve and the family and collie dog in the trap left the farm first, then the cook driving a farm wagon with a cow aboard, then the men driving two-horse tipcarts. We were away all summer.

My brother Ernest built ice houses at the edge of the bog and meadow as a young man and was in the ice business most of his life. Later he built two more at Stony Brook after putting in a dam and flume and making a pond. Here, because of less wind ice formed quicker. Two horse ice carts supplied the town at first, succeeded by ice trucks. During this time he owned cows and sold milk to Fickert's Dairy.

Then he had a herd of fifty registered Gurnsey cattle and some young stock until just before he died in 1964. During these years he kept the farm up raising crops to fill the haymow and the silo. He also was in the wood business, buying many woodlots in several towns. He hired wood choppers and had a small sawmill on the farm. He sold coke and coal and fuel oil too. Gravel was still sold. There was an office building in

back of the outdoor fireplace and scales on which to drive the loads. He also had a flock of sheep and one day I went into the ram's pasture for some Porter apples and the ram chased me. So I took a few quick leaps into the apple tree. He planted an apple and peach orchard near the trout hatchery. He flooded Stony Brook near East Main Street and gave the use of a skating pond to the townspeople.

I hoped never to leave the home of my ancestors, five generations of us on the farm. I lived there seventy-seven years until my brother died in 1964. I am the last Pratt in my family although I have one nephew, Robert D. Hall and his family.

The farm has harbored many, from the Indians and Pilgrims, to us who live in the Space Age. I applaud the town's action in buying the farm, which is considered one of the largest and finest in eastern Massachusetts. It is too precious to lose. We desperately need the farms, rain forest, wetlands and marshes which are the source of so much life on our planet.



LOUISE PRATT, who lived on the Pratt Farm on East Main Street with her family, was the valedictorian of the Middleboro High School Class of 1905.

The Eddy Homestead

The story of the Eddy family and its East Middleboro roots is at once a typical American story and a unique saga spanning four centuries.

By Jane Lopes

The story of the Eddy family of Middleboro is at once typical of the average American family history and unique because of its cast of characters and its setting.

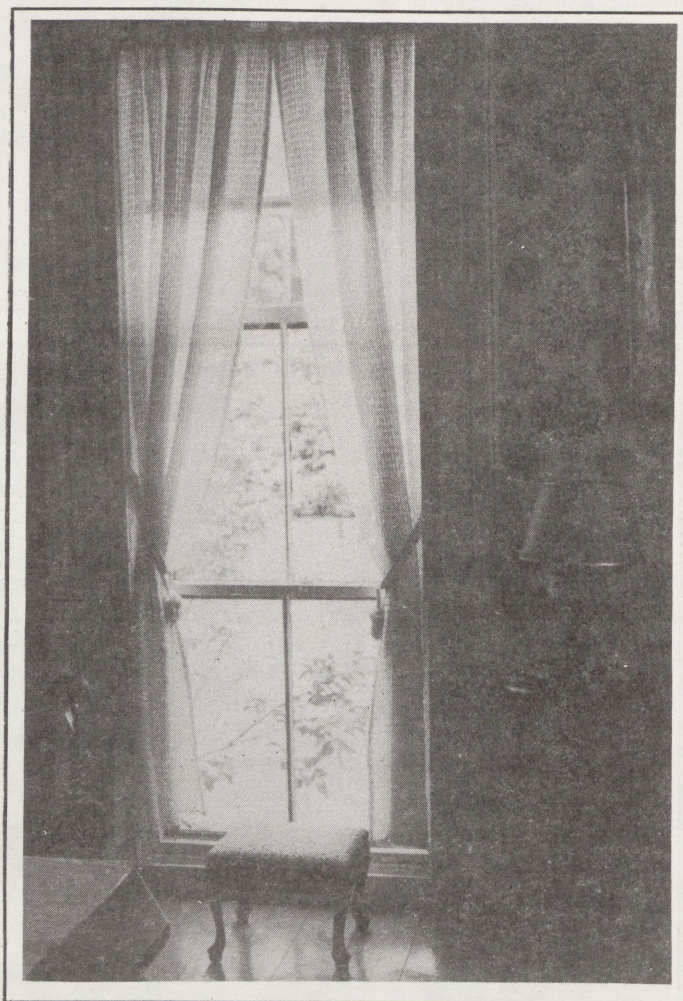
There is a typical "rags to riches" element in the story, in that the first American Eddy, Samuel, was a tailor, the son of an Anglican minister, while his descendants included a Revolutionary War captain who served under Washington, an attorney who was an associate of Daniel Webster and counted John Adams among his friends, and one of the founders of the Boston Floating Hospital. The uniqueness of the family's story is found in the anecdotes about Zackariah Eddy's confrontations with the Tory Judge Peter Oliver, about Samuel Eddy's decision to call the family homestead "Pilgrim Farm" in honor of his ancestor Samuel, about Captain Joshua Eddy's account books being found under the floor boards in the attic of his house, and about "Grandmother" Breck's penchant for dressing like Queen Victoria, whom she apparently greatly admired.

Just as the Eddy family's story is both representative and unique, the family's homestead in East Middleboro, now operated as a museum by the Eddy Homestead Association, is typical of a home owned by a comfortably well off family of the early 19th century, and at the same time reflects the personalities of the five individuals who owned it.

Samuel Eddy unknowingly "founded" Eddyville, a section of East Middleboro, when he joined in the "26 Men's Purchase" 31 years after his arrival in Plymouth with his brother John in 1630. Samuel's son Obadiah was one of the first generation of Eddys to live in Middleboro—he was also one of the first to rebuild after his home was burned during King Philip's War.

Obadiah's property was inherited by his son Samuel, a wheelwright, who was the first to build a home on the site of the present homestead. The house, which was moved across Plymouth Street in 1803, is still in existence as the ell of a later building.

Samuel left his property to his son Zackariah (the Zackariah who sparred politically with Judge Oliver). Zackariah died of smallpox in 1777 and is buried in the smallpox Cemetery on Soule Street. His eldest son John, who printed one of the first almanacs in the country in his Eddyville print shop, was killed during the French and Indian War. Next to inherit the homestead property was Captain Joshua Eddy, John's brother, who served under Washington during the Revolution and built



FLOOR TO CEILING windows in the Eddy Homestead were built during the ownership of Charlotte Eddy Pratt. They enhance the beauty of the "organ room" and the "portrait room," the two formal parlors in the house.

the present Eddy Homestead in 1803 as a gift for his son Zackariah, and Zackariah's bride, Sally Edson.

Zackariah, one of the most prominent attorneys in Massachusetts and a colleague of Daniel Webster, added to the house and its surrounding acreage and was followed as the first owner of the Eddy Homestead by his youngest daughter Charlotte, who also made improvements to the property and passed it to

her nephew, General Samuel Breck, who named the homestead property "Pilgrim Farm."

The general built a small house in the side yard and turned the main house over to his son, Dr. Samuel Breck, a well-known Boston physician and one of the founders of the Boston Floating Hospital.

The last person to own the homestead as a private residence was Louise Eddy Break, "Grandmother Breck," widow of the doctor, who loved the house so much that she left her share in trust for future generations. Her son George, the founder of the Eddy Family Association, helped to complete the project his mother began. In the 1960s the Eddy Homestead became a museum, a display area for family belongings and a research center for those interested in the Eddy family and local history.

Now that the family has managed to preserve much of its written history, many family belongings and one of its best-known family homes, members would like to reach out to the community more, and share the wealth of information and local history they have collected.

"This is not our house, the Eddy house, it's everybody's house," says Sylvia Breck, vice president of the Homestead Association, whose husband Richard is descended from Samuel Eddy. "We would like to pull in more local people."

There are many interesting items to see inside the handsome Federal style house, and the owners over the years also incorporated some interesting architectural features in the house itself.

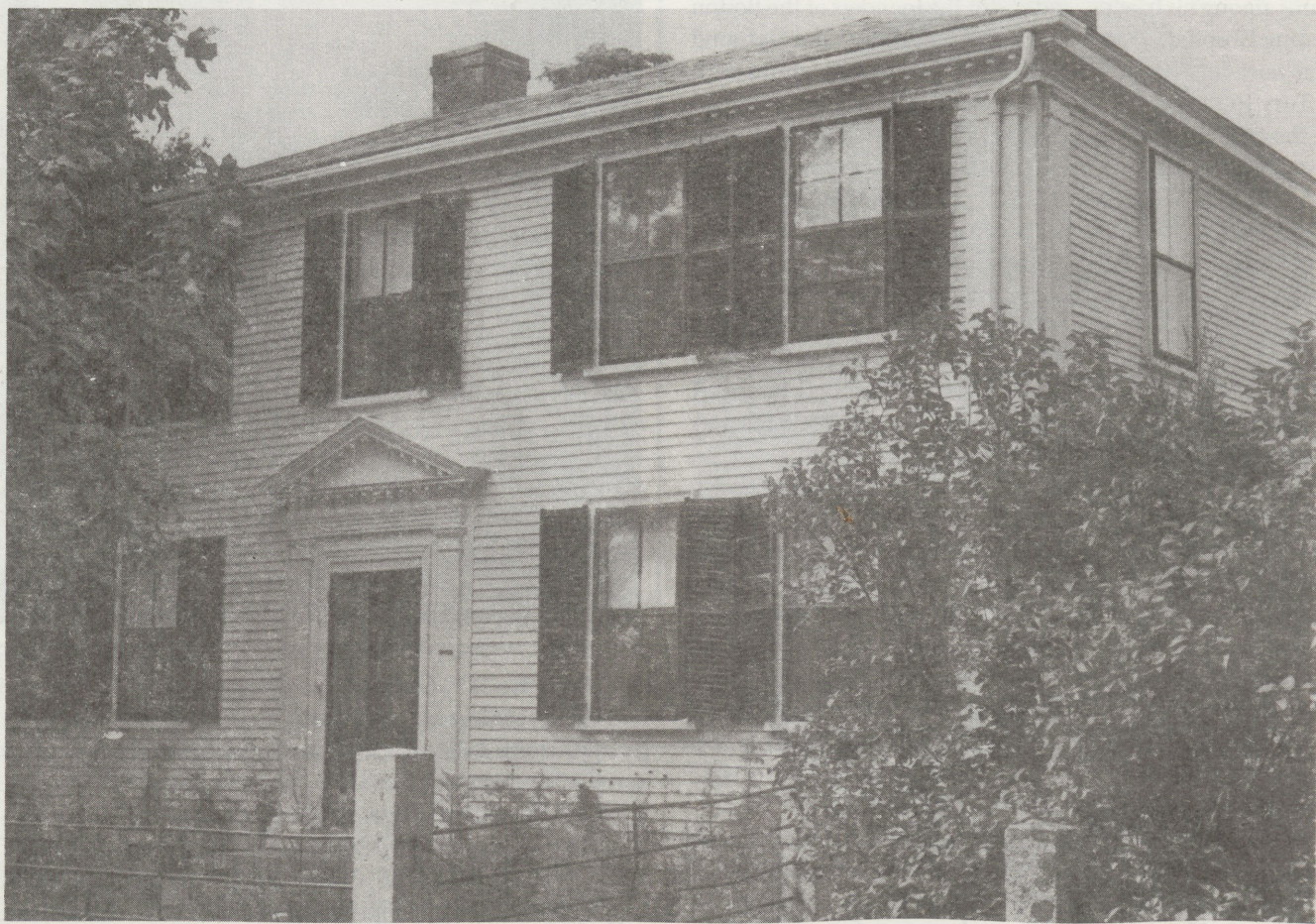
"Some things have been given over the years, while others were left here by the heirs of owners," Mrs. Breck said. "A majority are Eddy family items."

There is the chair with writing arm where Rev. Isaac Eddy wrote one of the sermons read at President Lincoln's funeral, a lovely canopy bed in one of the upstairs chambers, a portrait which is supposed to have been painted by Cephus Thompson, "Grandmother" Breck's wedding dress, and a copy of the first Eddy genealogy. There is china which was purchased abroad by members of the family, and there is a photograph taken at the first family reunion in 1920.

Of architectural interest are the beautiful floor to ceiling windows which Charlotte Eddy Pratt had built into the two front rooms, the handsome front hallway, and an interesting second floor screened porch.

The house is open to the public on weekends from 11-6 through September and may be toured by appointment by calling Mrs. Breck at 947-6058 or the caretakers, the Moshers, at

(Continued on page 15)



THE EDDY HOMESTEAD, built in 1803 for Zackariah Eddy and his bride, is now operated as a museum by the Eddy Homestead Association. The house is

furnished in a style typical of the mid-19th century and contains many Eddy family items. (Photos by Jane Lopes)



ORNAMENTATION ONLY was the purpose of the carved cornices of this building on Center Avenue. Built with thick walls and triple-sash windows, it was

originally designed for cold storage, later was occupied by Colonial Casket Company. (Photos by Clint Clark)

Industry Without Art Is Brutality

by Clint Clark

Ted Eayrs and I have kept in touch since he retired from the Gazette and turned to restoring antique furniture at his home on Pearl Street, and was working on a 19th century hutch cabinet when I dropped in recently.

"Those old-time craftsmen didn't have the equipment we do today, but they sure knew how to use hand tools in an artistic way," I remarked.

"Industry without art is brutality," he said. "Is that original?" I asked. "No, I read it somewhere," he replied.

Whoever said it was aware of the kinship between architects and artisans, evidence of which is inescapable in this old New England town.

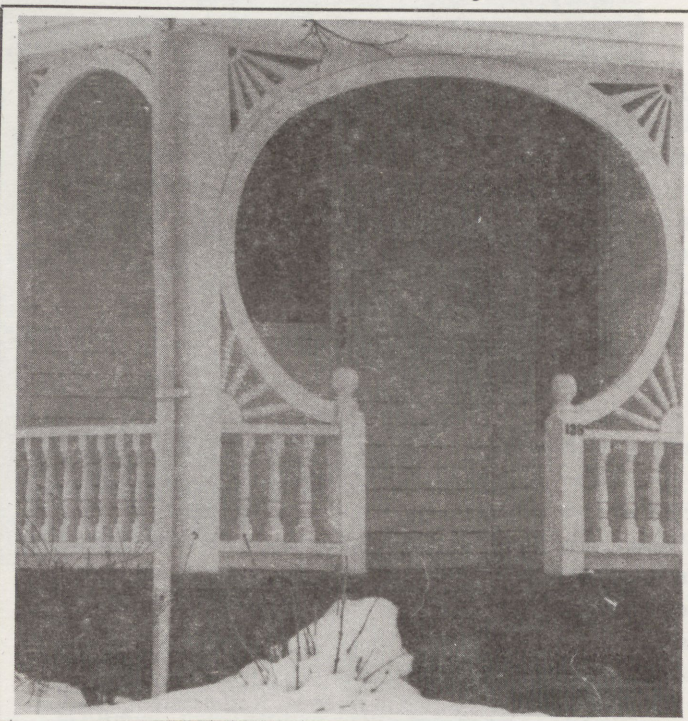
A random tour of any residential neighborhood, save new housing developments, turns up a splendid variety of relics of the Victorian era in the form of graceful piazzas and elegant porticoes.

Coinciding with the fad for "gingerbread" in the 1800s and well into this century was the invention of multiple, power-driven wood lathes.

Mass production, however, took nothing away from the appeal of what is truly an attractive art form.

Nor did it lead to sameness. On Arch Street, to name but

(Continued next page)



MIDDLE CLASS MIDDLEBOREANS, as well as the residents of mansions on South Main Street, had a taste for Victorian era "gingerbread."

Industry Without Art . . .

(Continued from page 11)

one of many others, no two examples of "fancy" woodworking are exactly alike; homeowners, it seems, were status-conscious even then and abhorred aping their neighbors.

On the other hand, shoe factories were in the main strictly utilitarian.

But we find an exception on Center Avenue. Formerly a casket factory it was originally designed as a cold storage plant.

Yet, look at the carved braces at the eaves. There is little doubt that they are ornamental, rather than incorporated to strengthen the structure.

Now consider the cupolas on barns; ventilation was their sole purpose, but they too were designed to be ornamental as well as useful.

Thus, everywhere in Middleboro the town exhibits ample evidence that in the past at least, industry and art went hand-in-hand.

1849 Revisited . . .

(Continued from page 5)

Grading little garden.

Mr. Silas Hathaway worked 10 hours; pd. \$1

Mr. Swift worked 10 hours; pd. 1

Mr. Aldrich worked 10 hours; pd. 1

David Swift's boy worked 10 hours; pd. .33

Paid Abner Perkins for 4 bushels of oats 1.96

Mr. Doane brought new cook stove."

Others who worked on the Thompson farm included: Daniel Alden, Calvin Shaw, Mr. Francis, Solomon White, Mr. Washburn (stone mason), Levi Hathaway, and Mr. Perry (painter).

One event that must have stirred up a great deal of interest in Titicut was the departure of five native sons who left to seek their fortunes in California. The diary tells us that on October 2nd:

"Joseph Coreia, J. Davis Pratt, Philip C. Pratt, Seth Wilbur, Capt. Geo. Pratt, all of Titicut, left home to embark in the ship Oscar from Mattapoisett for California."

and on October 6:

"Ship Oscar sailed for California."

Further research has told us that of these five Forty-niners, Philip Colby Pratt, son of Zebulon Pratt, died in California in July, 1850, at the age of 32; J. Davis Pratt, Mr. Thompson's brother-in-law and son of Johnathon C. Pratt who lived on Plymouth Street, settled in Roseville, California, where he operated a hay, grain, feed and farm machine business.

In the days when there was no town water system, the condition of a homeowner's well was a constant concern. The entry of September 26 tells us that:

"Calvin Shaw's well 5 feet and clear
Mr. Hathaway's well 10 inches and clear
My well 13 inches and riley"

This called for corrective action, and we read in a subsequent entry:

"Job Johnson cleaned out my well...\$1"

To us who are accustomed to the month-long commercial extravaganza that Christmas has become, it is interesting to note that in 1849 Christmas was just another work day. On December 24th, J. G. Thompson went to Boston in the morning and from there to Newburyport to settle an insurance claim, staying overnight at the Merrimack House. His entry for Christmas Day, Tuesday, December 25th, reads:

"Snowy. Left Newburyport for Boston."

To us who are accustomed to the month-long commercial extravaganza Christmas has become, it is interesting to note that in 1849 Christmas was just another work day. Mr. Thompson's entry for Christmas Day reads: "Snowy. Left Newburyport for Boston."

Left Boston for Hartford 4 p.m. —
at City Hotel, Room No. 200 —"

On the 26th:

"In Hartford. Left Hartford for Springfield at 7 p.m. At Massasoit House Room No. 11"

On the 27th:

Left Springfield for Boston 8 1/2 a.m.
Saw David Harding"

On the 28th:

Left Boston for home 5/8 1/4 to 4 p.m."

No Christmas tree, no gifts, no celebration, no office parties, and no post-holiday depression.

It was as true in 1849 as it is today that the biggest news stories are catastrophes, disasters, and bad news in general. James G. Thompson's diary reflects this phenomenon, the items of national importance that he records, all falling into this category. On April 27th, Mr. Thompson writes:

"News of burning Parliament House
by mob at Montreal."

After the American Revolution, a massive influx of Loyalists caused a serious imbalance of British over French in Montreal and led to unrest that culminated in the Rebellion of 1837-38. After the Rebellion, the two Canadas were united with Mon-

1849 Revisited . . .

treas as the capital, but the Rebellion Act Losses Bill, which was detrimental to the French, led to more rioting, during which the Parliament buildings were burned. It is this incident that shocked J. G. Thompson enough to cause him to record it in his diary.

On a quieter note, he writes on July 12:

"Left Hingham $\frac{5}{8}$ 3 p.m. in carriage for Quincy. Bought 4 stone posts...."

These four posts of dressed Quincy granite may be seen today, still in place, in front of the house at 65 Pleasant Street.

Early in the year, there were two disasters involving ships that J. G. Thompson noted in his diary. The first occurred on January 13:

Steamer Empire State burned at the wf. in Fall River @ 11 p.m."

As an insurance adjuster, Mr. Thompson probably took a professional interest in this event, although he was not involved

in the settlement of the insurance claim. The "Empire State," Capt. Benjamin Brayton commanding, had been added to the fleet of the prospering Fall River Line shortly before, in 1848. After this fire, she was refitted and continued in service until 1871.

The second disaster was recorded in the diary on March 1:

"Ship Franklin lost and 8 lives off Wellfleet Cape Cod."

Actually, eleven people were drowned in this shipwreck with twenty-two surviving. The "Franklin," under the command of Charles Smith, had sailed from London bound for Boston with passengers and a mixed cargo that included fruit trees, garden seeds, tow cloth and spices.

Henry Thoreau, on his walking tour of Cape Cod the following October, noted that John Newcomb's garden contained cabbage, parsley and broccoli, all grown from seeds salvaged

(Continued next page)



MIDDLEBORO HIGH SCHOOL'S Class of 1904 included, back row, from left, Percy Jackson, Lena Macomber, Jean Surrey, Florence McDermid, George Richardson, Susie Bump, Helen Kingman, Minerva Sisson and David Cunningham; middle row, from left, Mary Pierce, Josie Holloway, Edna Tirrell,

class vice president Grace Tinkham, Ruth Martin and Annie Dorr; front row, from left, class president - Joe Hathaway, Mary Libby, Helen Ryder, Irena Cushing, class prophecy writer Abbie Lucas, Edith Whitman, valedictorian Edith Orcut and Wallace Wright.



An especially poignant entry states that: "Lloyd Perkins, adopted son of Linus Washburn was drowned in the tack factory pond above his father's home. Aged 10 years."

from the "Franklin"; interestingly, this is the first record of broccoli growing in North America. Mr. Newcomb (The Wellfleet Oysterman, as Thoreau calls him) also delivered a vivid eyewitness account of the breaking up of the ship and drowning of the victims. Many bundles of tow cloth were washed ashore, much to the profit of the beachcombers; and, even as late as October, Thoreau observed more coming in on the breakers.

The captain and his first mate were among those who lost their lives, the irony of which became apparent when the captain's suitcase washed ashore later. In this valise were found incriminating documents showing that the captain, in conspiracy with the ship's Boston owners, had planned to wreck the ship for the insurance. The captain was the victim of his own criminal act, but the owners, Wilson and Crafts, got off lightly after a trial that took place in Boston.

Mr. Thompson recorded the passing of his friends and acquaintances as they occurred. Most of these entries are merely matter-of-fact statements ("Judge Appollos Eaton died, age 71"), but a few of them stir the imagination, such as:

"...two brothers Leach killed on the
F. R. railroad in chaise a 2 North
Crossing from North Bridgewater Depot"

An especially poignant entry states that:

"Lloyd Perkins, adopted son of Linus
Washburn was drowned in the tack
factory pond above his father's
home. Aged 10 years."

And Mr. Thompson was shocked when three members of the Richmond family, Elisha, his son, Alanson, and the two-year old child of Lysander, all died within the space of 15 days (Sept. 11-25).

On Thursday, March 22, Mr. Thompson wrote:

"Parker Mill at Tionet burned.
Ins. @ 30,000."

Two Titicut men, Isaac and Jared Pratt, established a nail-making operation in Wareham in 1822. Their first mill was at the lower dam on the Wankinquoah River, the site of the present Tremont Nail Company. In 1828, they built the Tihonet Works at the Tihonet Dam where there was a 28-foot fall; at this time, the lower dam was also raised to the height of 28 feet. The new iron works at Tihonet consisted of a large

rolling mill, a puddling furnace for making iron and fifty nail machines, and prospered under the name of the Wareham Iron Company until 1834, when the company passed into the hands of others. After being operated by a succession of various parties, the works were incorporated as the Parker Mills in 1845, the location becoming important enough to merit its own railway station when the railroad first came to Wareham in 1847. (Today, although the tracks are gone, the station still stands there full of old machinery and other odds and ends.)

The large nail factory that we know today as the Tremont Nail Company was built at the lower dam in 1848 and was operated jointly with the iron works at Tihonet. It is the Tihonet mill that is mentioned in the Thompson diary, and whose loss by fire was covered by the insurance company he represented. Subsequent entries in the diary mention several trips to Tihonet with officials from the Hartford headquarters of the insurance company and a final settlement of the claim on April 8th.

Today there is no mill at the upper dam, but the sluice gate still holds back the dammed-up river and globules of iron slag cover the grounds.

One of the most astounding events recorded in the diary of James Gardner Thompson, is the murder of Dr. George Parkman. Dr. Parkman, the uncle of Francis Parkman, the renowned historian, is first referred to in the entry of November 24th, simply:

"Dr. Parkman missing."

On December 1st, Mr. Thompson wrote:

"Terrible! Dr. Parkman's body
found under Dr. Webster's office.
Dr. W. arrested."

Both Parkman and Webster were professors at Harvard University, Dr. Parkman, a professor of medicine, while Dr. Webster held the Erving professorship of chemistry and mineralogy. Dr. Webster's scale of living and extravagant hospitality caused him to live far beyond his means, and he borrowed from his friends, including \$400 from Dr. Parkman. When, after five years, little of this was repaid, he gave his note in the amount of \$2,432 to Parkman, representing the unpaid balance plus a further loan; this new amount was

(Continued on page 16)

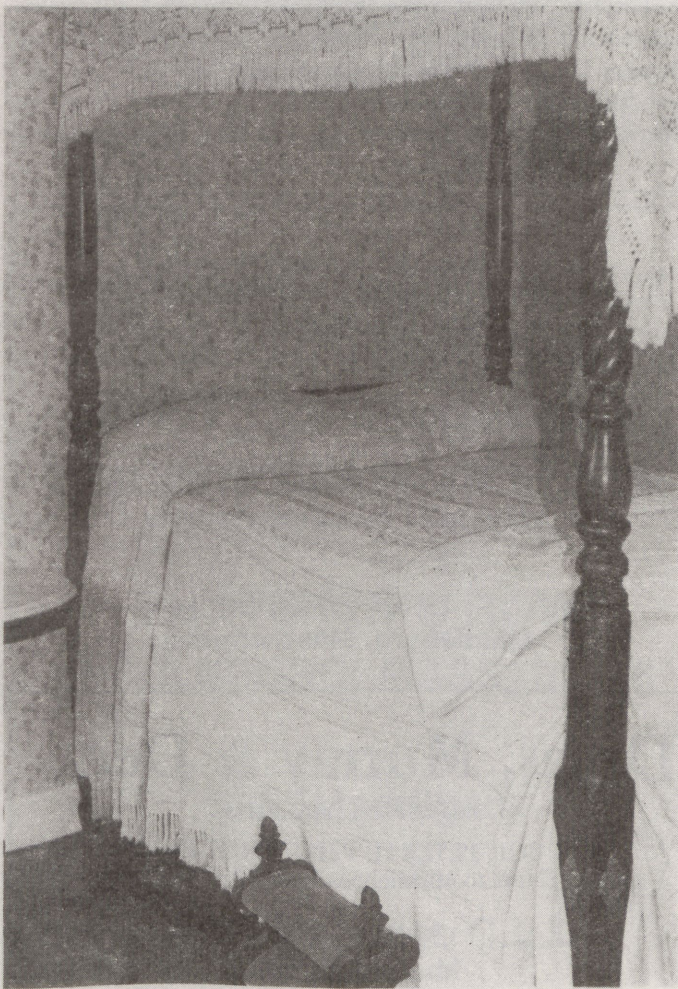
Eddy Homestead . . .

(Continued from page 10)

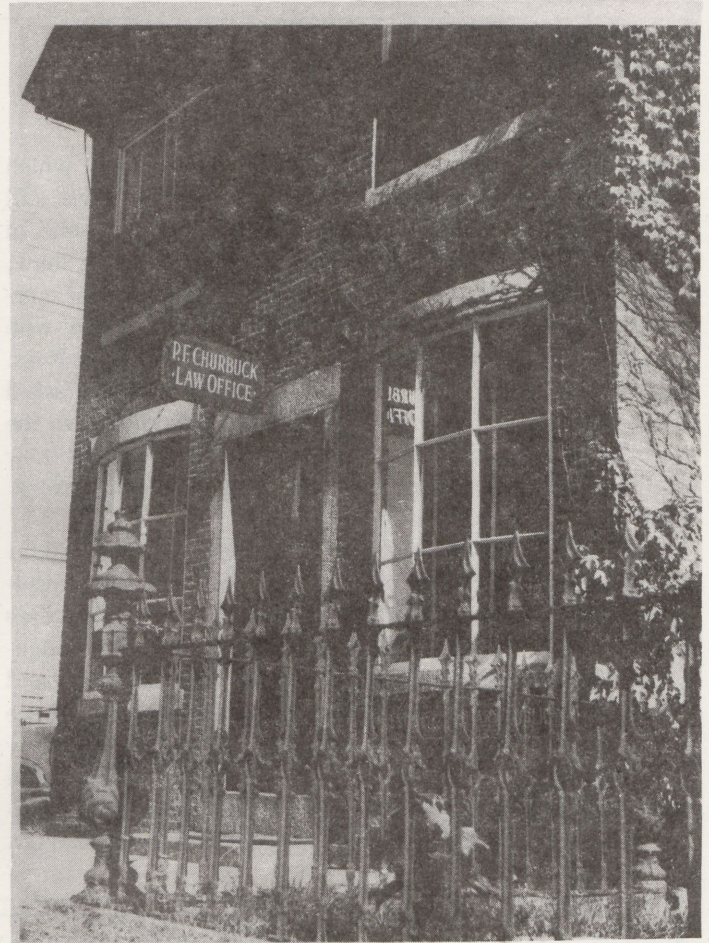
947-3615. Copies of "Eddyville" will be available in local book stores.

The history of the family and the homestead are outlined in a fascinating book, "Eddyville, Middleboro, Massachusetts, 1616-1987," which is a collection of articles, speeches, family records and reports, and a "tour" of the homestead. At this writing, the book was being printed at Pilgrim Press in Kingston and was to be available sometime in August. The house itself is open to the public on weekends through the end of September and by appointment.

In addition to having access to so much of its history, the Eddy family, unlike many modern families, still gets together regularly. The Eddy Family Association, founded in 1920 and thus one of the oldest continuing family associations in the country, gathers in August of each year for an annual meeting and reunion featuring a guest speaker and catered luncheon.



THIS CANOPY bed in an upstairs bedroom of the Eddy Homestead is one of several antique beds in the house.



THE LAW OFFICE of "Lawyer Robinson" in the 1880s, this handsome building at North Main and Jackson streets has been in continual commercial use since the early 19th century. (Photo by Clint Clark)

Lawyer Robinson's Law Office

By Clint Clark

The late Atty. Percy F. Churbuck in 1969 practiced his profession in the small brick building which for many years was known as "Lawyer Robinson's law office."

Its age is not on record. It is known, however that it was a jewelry and watchmaker's shop before Lawyer Robinson made it his office in 1878, and that he purchased a Victorian mansion, next door on North Main Street in 1860, soon after which he erected the ornamental iron fence in the foreground at a cost of \$164.38.

A few years after this picture was taken in 1969, the Robinson homestead was demolished and the fence torn down to make way for a modern office building. The former law office, remarkably well preserved, remains at the corner of North Main and Jackson streets. In continual use since the early 1800s, it is Middleboro's oldest business building.

1849 Revisited . . .

(Continued from page 14)

secured by a mortgage on Webster's personal property, which included a chest of mineral specimens. Webster was still unable to improve his financial position, however, and in 1848, he borrowed \$1,200 from another friend, Robert Shaw, pledging as security the minerals already specified in the mortgage to Dr. Parkman. This became known to Parkman, who was infuriated and accused Webster of fraudulent dealings. After a series of acrimonious discussions, Webster asked Parkman to meet him in his (Webster's) laboratory on the afternoon of November 21. Parkman was seen at that hour on Grove Street, Boston, approaching the Medical College: this was the last time he was ever seen.

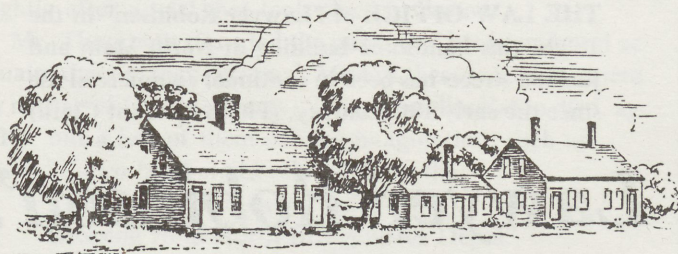
The mystery of Dr. Parkman's disappearance persisted for a week until the janitor of the college, having become suspicious of Dr. Webster's conduct, discovered some human bones in a vault beneath the doctor's laboratory. Further investigation turned up more human fragments in the furnace and in a tea chest. Dr. Webster was arrested, whereupon, at the police station, he made an unsuccessful attempt at suicide by taking strychnine. His trial, lasting from March 19th until April 1, 1850, was based entirely upon circumstantial evidence, the main feature of which was the identification of Dr.

Parkman's false teeth, which had been found in Webster's furnace.

Despite the outcry from the public, which had a distrust of circumstantial evidence, Webster was convicted. Webster sent an impassioned plea to the governor (Briggs) proclaiming his innocence. When this produced no results, he appealed to the governor again, confessing his guilt, but asserting that the crime had not been premeditated and asking that the death penalty be set aside. Other pressures were brought to bear upon the governor, however, and Dr. Webster was hanged on August 30, 1850.

Many of the entries in Mr. Thompson's diary leave us with a sense of frustration.

Many of the entries in Mr. Thompson's diary leave us with a sense of frustration. What, for instance, happened to his office boy who was bitten by a rabid dog on May 30th? Save for a statement on June 1st that "Saul Gault went again to the hospital," we hear nothing more of the incident. Whatever happened to the other three Forty-Niners who left Titicut on October 2nd? What was the ailment that kept Mr. Thompson "sick abed" for almost six weeks? In spite of these unanswered questions, however, our eyes have been opened to



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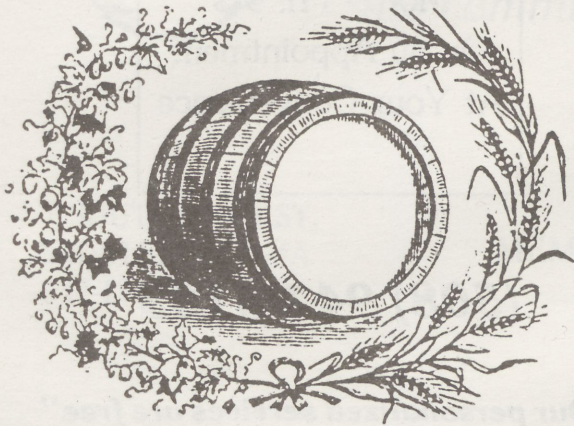
947-4433

George C. Decas, Esq.
Daniel F. Murray, Esq.
William C. Decas, Esq.

many aspects of life as it was in 1849 and to some astonishing events that we may never have known about otherwise.

James Gardner Thompson died on October 17, 1853, at the age of 37 and is interred in the Parish cemetery in Titicut.

(Mr. Barden is a descendant, through his mother, of James G. Thompson. His father, George Barden Sr., was "the last boy to grow up on Barden Hill," Mr. Barden reports. A resident of Mattapoisett since his retirement, Mr. Barden is a member of the Middleborough Historical Association.)



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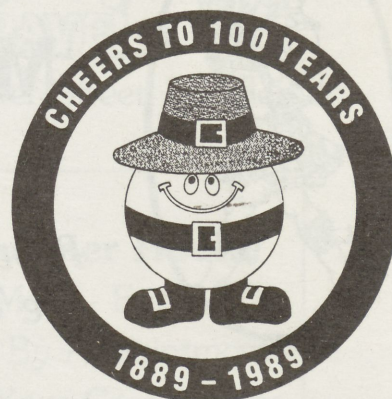
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